

Message Text

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ACTION AF-05

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2370

USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0823

EO 11652: GPS

TAGS: BPRO, MR

SUBJECT: TRADE PROMOTION: NOUAKCHOTT-KIFFA HIGH CONSTRUCTION
CONTRACT

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 0816

ACTION REQUESTED: URGE DEPARTMENT/USDOC PUBLICIZE SUBJECT TRADE OPPORTUNITY (REFTEL) WIDELY AMONG LARGER US DIVERSIFIED CONSTRUCTION FIRMS. UNDER PRESENT NON-COMPETITIVE CONDITIONS HERE, 83 MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT WILL LIKELY GO BY DEFAULT TO FRENCH FIRM (SUCH AS COLLAS, S.A.) WHICH WOULD THEN BE IN POSITION COMPLETE THE OTHER HALF OF 1200 KM NOUAKCHOTT-NEMA ROAD PROJECT AS WELL AS PICK UP CONTRACTS FOR OTHER UP-COMING PROJECTS TO BE FINANCED BY ARAB OIL MONEY. US FIRMS BIDDING UNDER PRE-SELECTION TENDER (DEADLINE JULY 15) MUST BE PREPARED SEND REPS TO NOUAKCHOTT WHERE COMPLETE ENGINEERING STUDIES CAN BE OBTAINED FROM GERMAN DESIGN ENGINEERS.

1. GIRM IS MOVING QUICKLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GRANTS AND CONCESSIONARY LOANS FROM ARAB OIL STATES PLEDGED DURING PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH'S RECENT FUND-RAISING SWING THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST. FIRST ON PROJECT LIST IS CONSTRUCTION OF THE NOUAKCHOTT-NEMA HIGHWAY. FIRST 600 KM SEGMENT OF THIS ROAD (NKT-KIFFA) IS NOW UP FOR INTERNATIONAL BIDS. OTHER PROJECTS WILL INCLUDE THE CONTINUATION OF THE ROAD TO NEMA, CONSTRUCTION OF A PROPOSED STEEL MILL SEVERAL AIRPORT EXTENTIONS, AND A PORT
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EXTENSION AT NOUADHIBOU. THE FIRM THAT SUCESSFULLY BIDS ON THE

NOUAKCHOTT-KIFFA ROAD WILL BE WELL PLACED TO WIN CONTRACTS FOR THESE UP-COMING PROJECTS.

2. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE ONLY LIKELY SUCCESSFUL BIDDER IS COLLAS, S.A. OF FRANCE, A COMPANY SAID TO BE CONTROLLED BY A BROTHER OF LATE FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU. COLLAS HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN MAURITANIA (HAVING BUILD THE 200 KM NOUAKCHOTT-ROSSO ROAD) AND IS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH BCOM, A FRENCH FIRM WHICH DID THE ENGINEERING STUDIES FOR PART OF THE NOUAKCHOTT-NEMA HIGHWAY.

3. ANOTHER PORTION OF THE ROAD ENGINEERING STUDY WAS, HOWEVER, COMPLETED BY THE GERMAN FIRM SCHROEDER-PLANUNG KG. THIS FIRM IS INTERESTED IN ATTRACTING AMERICAN EXPERTISE TO THIS AND OTHER MAURITANIAN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WITH WHICH IT IS CONNECTED. MOREOVER, FIRM'S LOCAL REP IS WILLING SHARE WITH US FIRMS HIS COMPLETE ENGINEERING DOSSIER ON THE NOUAKCHOTT-NEMA ROAD WHICH RUNS TO MORE THAN 12 VOLUMES. SUCH COOPERATION WOULD, OF COURSE, BE INFORMAL AND UNOFFICIAL AND COULD CANCEL OUT ANY ADVANTAGE NOW HELD BY COLLAS OR OTHER EUROPEAN FIRMS. IN ORDER TAKE ADVANTAGE THIS COOPERATION, US FIRMS MUST, OF COURSE, SEND REPS TO NOUAKCHOTT. PRESENCE OF US CONSTRUCTION COMPANY REPS WILL IN ANY EVENT BE NECESSARY IF THEY ARE TO BEAT JULY 15 PRE-SELECTION DEADLINE.

4. IN LIGHT OF UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY BREAK INTO PROMISING MARKET HERE NOW BEING FUELED BY ARAB OIL MONEY, STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT AND USDOC PUBLICIZE THIS TRADE OPPORTUNITY WIDELY AMONG DIVERSIFIED US CONSTRUCTION FIRMS. SUCH FIRMS COULD INCLUDE BECHTEL (WHICH CONSTRUCTED MAURITANIA'S COPPER CONCENTRATION PLANT) AND MORRISON-KNUTSON (WHOSE SUBSIDIARY H.K. FERGUSON IS DOING PREINVESTMENT STEEL MILL STUDY FOR GIRM).
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